

ARTI FACT

MEDIEVAL VISION

IN THE ROLLING COUNTRYSIDE OUTSIDE Philadelphia, the neo-Romanesque mansion appears like a vision from medieval Europe. Glencairn, part of a religious community that established itself here in the late 19th century, is one of the rarest buildings in the nation. **PENNSYLVANIA INDUSTRIALIST** John Pitcairn, a prominent member of a Christian denomination known as the New Church, bankrolled what would come to be known as Bryn Athyn—three massive residences for his extended family, one of them Glencairn, plus a cathedral—in one of the most unique building projects in American history. **ACCORDING TO THE NOMINATION** for the recently declared national historic landmark district, Bryn Athyn “comprises an exceptional and enduring essay of the American Arts and Crafts Movement.” While the Gothic and Romanesque are very much part of the buildings’ imposing presence, the arts and crafts vision predominates. **THE PROCESS THAT YIELDED** the masterworks is no less remarkable than the end product. The project created its own medieval guild system, convening a small army of skilled masons, carpenters, metal fabricators, and glassmakers who would exercise their creativity and work outside the confines of blueprints. Plans were eschewed for improvisation. **GLENCAIRN TOOK SHAPE** an inspiration at a time. Built between 1927 and 1938, it has more than 100 rooms on 11 floors, rich with handcarved woodwork, elaborate tile mosaics, and stained glass. Today it is a museum dedicated to the history of religion, exhibiting art and artifacts from a wide variety of cultures. **READ THE NHL NOMINATION ONLINE** at www.nps.gov/history/nhl/designations/samples/pa/BrynAthyn.pdf.

